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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

BY ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

CONDITIONS OF MENSTRUATION.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association*, in an editorial reviewing the papers of two women physicians on this subject, asks if the modern conditions of living and dress are not responsible for a considerable share of the suffering at this time. Primitive and savage women, it is believed, have a very scanty menstrual flow. The upright position promotes congestion which causes pain. Lax abdominal muscles can be strengthened by proper physical exercises. Deep breathing can be promoted by well-directed effort and the absence of constricting bands in the clothing. This will equalize the circulation and relieve congestion. The change in temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure occurring at this time are negligible. Under normal conditions there should be no more suffering with disorders of the generative organs than with disturbances of digestion.

THE PREVENTION OF POISONING BY BICHLORIDE OF MERCURY.—It is suggested in *Pediatrics* that bichloride tablets sold to the public should each contain one and one-fourth grains of tartar emetic so as to produce vomiting before the poison can be absorbed.

AID TO THE DYING.—A paper in the *Medical Record* on this subject is of especial interest to nurses. The writer believes that the patient should be told by his physician of the seriousness of his condition but not deprived of all hope, as many apparently hopeless cases recover. Man is by nature a religious being and should not, at this time, be left without religious ministrations. While the dying should not be worried with useless attentions they should have everything possible done for their relief. Change of posture to relieve uneasiness, moistening the lips and tongue to assuage thirst, admission of plenty of fresh air, or if indicated, the administration of oxygen, keeping the mouth clean and attending to the excretory organs and giving morphia to relieve unnecessary pain are mentioned. Conversation about the patient or remarks that would be painful or disagreeable to him should be absolutely prohibited. It is not known how much an apparently unconscious person understands of what is passing about him. It is unkind to administer medicine by mouth when swallowing is difficult and it is cruel to continue hypodermic medication when it is of no avail. There should be a joyful confidence in the wider horizon of life that lies beyond.

LIABILITY OF THE OPERATING SURGEON.—In an action against an operating surgeon for damage caused by the hospital attendants in negligently leaving gauze in the wound after dressing it, thus causing pulmonary tuberculosis, it was held that an operating surgeon who operated at a number of different hospitals is not liable for the negligence of hospital surgeons, nurses, or internes in the after-dressing of such wounds, if the operating surgeon is without knowledge of such negligence.

A WAY OF LIFE.—In an address to Yale students, Sir William Osler says man should live in day-tight compartments. Waste of energy, mental distress and nervous worries dog the steps of a man who is anxious about the future. The failure to cultivate the power of peaceful concentration is the greatest single cause of mental break-down. The quiet life in day-tight compartments will help you to bear your own and others' burdens with a light heart. Life is a straight, plain business and the way is clearly blazed for you by generations of strong men into whose labors you enter and whose ideals must be your inspiration.

HOME TREATMENT FOR SCIATICA.—The *Interstate Medical Journal* quoting from a German medical contemporary, says that in this treatment a pail of boiling water should be placed in a tub large enough to contain a chair. A tablespoon of oleum pini sylvestris is poured into the boiling water. The patient sits upon the chair with his feet outside the tub; two sheets are pinned around his neck so that they reach the floor, enveloping the tub completely. He remains in this steam bath for twenty minutes, is then rubbed briskly with a cold wet towel and is put to bed for an hour. If necessary, especially with older people, cold applications may be placed upon the head during the bath. This is given every other day. Five to fifteen sittings are said to give permanent relief. The bowels are kept open and iodides are given internally, preferably iodine vasogen, seven to eight drops three times a day.

LOCAL AFTER-TREATMENT OF ULCERS OF THE LEGS.—An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* recommends as a protection from relapses that when the ulcers are healed the legs should be bathed twice a day, the affected leg massaged with a 2 per cent alcoholic solution of carbolic acid and when dry, they should be dusted with talcum or rice powder. In the day-time a well fitting elastic stocking should be worn to prevent swelling of the leg.

OVER-EATING A CAUSE OF SICKNESS.—In an article in a Danish medical journal, quoted by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the benefit which follows the restriction of diet is dwelt upon. Chronic rheumatism, refractory to heat, baths, massage and drugs, may yield promptly and permanently when a few pounds of fat have

been lost and may return when the patient again over-eats. Restriction of the diet alone may bring a high blood pressure down to normal. Constipation is prevalent among the corpulent and a continuation of rheumatism and nervous symptoms are not infrequent.

CARE OF DELICATE AND PREMATURE CHILDREN.—At the meetings of the *American Medical Association*, it was stated that the two important requirements in these cases were nourishment and conservation of bodily heat. Incubators were considered unsatisfactory on account of defects in ventilation. The use of a clothes basket lined with oil-cloth and cotton batting and heated with water bottles was preferred. A covering of flannel was advised. A temperature of 90 degrees should be maintained. The face should be exposed while the body is kept warm, wrapped in absorbent cotton and oiled. Excessive heat was said to be a source of danger. If the child is too weak to nurse, a medicine dropper should be used, or a Breck feeder or a catheter. Care should be taken that a food clot does not enter the larynx and cause death. Fresh air was considered indispensable. One doctor had used a soap box with one side removed which was placed against a radiator. The results were satisfactory.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF WORRY.—In a paper in the *Medical Record* it is stated that physical manifestations of worry are depression of respiration, sighing, disturbances in the rate and force of heart beat vasomotor changes, disturbances in secretion, pallor, coldness of the extremities, relaxation and decreased motility of the alimentary tract, dilation of the pupil of the eye, loss of weight, insomnia, and general physical exhaustion. Worry is sometimes an important agent in producing diabetes, gout, exophthalmic goitre and chronic heart disease. Through the sympathetic nerves the secretions of the internal glands are affected. The blood vessels of the kidneys are dilated, allowing an abundant supply of blood to these organs. This increased blood pressure and the hyper-activity of the secreting cells may well account for the marked changes so often observed in worried individuals.

APPENDICITIS.—A writer in *The Lancet* believes that diet is a very important factor in the causation of appendicitis. This diseased prevails among meat-eating nations. It is therefore thought probable that the saturated fats, such as are contained in beef and mutton, may predispose toward it. Irregular meals, the quick lunch, imperfect teeth leading to faulty mastication of food, are contributory causes. The lack of physical exercise is also conducive to it. Hygienic living would seem to be the best prophylactic by keeping the body in the highest state of efficiency.